

these things hence, for it is written, God's house shall be called a house of worship, but ye have made it a place of sensuous entertainment.''

1. The Word of God ordained the use of Instrumental Music in the Worship of God only in the temple and in connection with the sacrifices.

2. It never was used in the Jewish synagogues in Bible times.

3. It never was used in the early Christian church.

4. The first record of its use in the Christian church was more than seven hundred years after Christ.

5. Its use became common in the Christian church in the Thirteenth Century. It was introduced along with other corruptions of worship by the Church of Rome.

6. It was excluded by the Reformed Churches in the great Protestant Reformation.

7. Its re-introduction into these Churches has been in comparatively recent times.

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### THE WITNESS COMMITTEE

Appointed by the Synod of the  
Reformed Presbyterian Church

119 Federal Street      Pittsburgh, Pa.

## Instrumental Music a Corruption of New Testament Worship.

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It is not denied that instrumental music was employed in the worship of the Old Testament. That its use was grounded upon divine authority is also freely admitted. But it is undertaken to show that what God appointed as an aid to worship under the Old Testament dispensation is a corruption of worship under the New.

### It Is Unauthorized.

1. Instrumental music is a corruption of New Testament worship because it is introduced without divine authority.

The imperial doctrine concerning divine worship is that that which is not commanded in worship is forbidden.

The Confession of Faith, Chapter XXI., Section 1, says: "The acceptable way of worshipping God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions

of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in Holy Scripture."

This rule was observed when instrumental music was brought into Old Testament worship. It was by the command of God. We read in 2 Chron. 29: 25: "And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad, the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets." Instrumental music was not only permitted, it was required.

#### It Is Forbidden.

How, then, is that which was required in worship under one dispensation, forbidden under another?

1. The worship of the New Testament is radically different from that of the Old. This distinction is clearly defined in the categorical statements of the Larger Catechism.

Question 33. Was the covenant of grace always administered after one and the same manner?

Answer. The covenant of grace was not always administered after one and the same manner, but the administrations of it under the Old Testament were different from those under the New.

Question 34. How was the covenant of grace administered under the Old Testament?

Answer. The covenant of grace was administered under the Old Testament by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover, and other types and ordinances which did all foreshadow Christ then to come, and were for that time sufficient to build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they then had full remission of sin and eternal salvation.

Question 35. How is the covenant of grace administered under the New Testament?

Answer. Under the New Testament when Christ the substance was exhibited, the same covenant of grace was and still is to be administered in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in which grace and salvation are held forth in more fullness, evidence and efficacy to all nations.

From these statements it is perfectly clear that while the covenant of grace is the same always, the manner of approach to God under the New Testament is radically different from that under the Old, and that this change is due to the fact of the incarnation—"when Christ the substance was exhibited."

Under the former dispensation worship was conducted through typical forms and shadows directing the mind of the worshipper to the promised Mes-

siah, while under the latter "When Christ the substance was exhibited," the mind of the worshipper looks directly up to Him and through Him to God.

The reason of this change is obvious. Man dwelling in the flesh has always felt the need of something tangible as a means of approach to God who is a pure spirit. So deeply grounded in man's nature is this necessity that his heart has been set upon idolatry; not so much in the first instance the worship of images, as the worshipping of God by images, ending in the worship of the image itself. To meet this necessity, until the fullness of time came, and God in the person of His Son appeared in human form, God instituted material forms of worship.

First, He appointed a holy place, the temple at Jerusalem. Second, He appointed holy men as priests whose business it was to mediate between the worshippers and God. Third, He appointed holy sacrifices which were to be offered by these holy men in the holy place. And as a suitable accompaniment to this materialistic and carnal worship. God appointed the use of instrumental music. "And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals and with psalteries and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad, the king's seer,

and of Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets. \* \* \* And when the burnt offering began the song of the Lord began also with the instruments ordained by David, and all the congregation worshipped. And the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded, and all this was continued until the burnt offering was finished" (2 Chron. 29: 25-27).

When I think of these carnal ordinances of a worldly sanctuary, the priests with their official vestments and every one, like the men in Ezekiel's vision, "with a slaughter weapon in his hand"; when I think of the dying victims, and the basins filled with blood, when I think of the bodies burning on the brazen altar and the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat, and I read of this magnificent outburst of sacred song accompanied with cymbals and with psalteries and with harps, I am led to believe that this was the most spiritual element in all the service and that it was appointed of God for this very purpose to give wings to their spiritual emotions by which their souls might rise to the contemplation of God and of the promised Messiah whose coming, and death and all their glorious fruits, these ceremonies foreshadowed and pledged. Instrumental music had

a relation to such a service which it could not have to a purely spiritual worship, and it was a mark of the matchless wisdom and infinite condescension of God that in those days of the church's childhood and under this cloudy and dark dispensation He authorized and commanded such an aid to the worship of his people.

But now all this is changed. The anti-type has come. Christ, the substance, has been exhibited. Man's need for something upon which his mind can stay itself in its approach to God has been supplied. The temptation to worship God by images has been removed. The need for a temple and a priesthood and sacrifices and instruments of music is entirely taken away. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." All these material objects, which stood between the worshipper and the object of worship, have been swept aside, and the whole infinite distance between man and God is filled by the one Mediator, Jesus Christ. There is room for no other. No temple; for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of it; no priest, seeing we have such a great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God. No blood of bulls and of goats, but the blood of Jesus Christ as

of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, and through Him we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Happily, the clearest revelation we have of the nature of New Testament worship, as distinguished from the Old, is from the lips of our Lord himself. We are indebted to the woman of Samaria for having raised the question as to acceptable worship. In His reply to her, Jesus announces the closing of the typical temple service and lays down the canon of New Testament worship.

"Woman," he says, "believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews; but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." On this passage Ryle says: "The utter passing away of the whole Jewish system seems clearly pointed out in this verse. To bring into the Christian church, holy places, sanctuaries, altars, priests, sacrifices, gorgeous vestments and the like is to dig up that which has long been buried and to turn to candles for light under the noonday

sun. \* \* \* When the veil was rent and the way into the holiest of all made manifest by Christ's death, then, and not till then, men worshipped in truth. Before Christ, they worshipped through types and shadows and figures and emblems. After Christ they worshipped in truth. Spirit is opposed to flesh, truth to shadow.'

Calvin, Meyer, Brown, Lange and other leading commentators substantially agree in this view. In this declaration of Christ, the King and Head of the church, the whole materialistic service of the Old Testament, including instrumental music, which, by His appointment, had been an integral part of it, was now set aside and abolished, and a New Testament worship was appointed which is spiritual in its nature and radically different from the Old. There is not a scintilla of evidence that either Christ or the apostles ever gave the remotest hint that sensuous instruments should have a place in the spiritual worship of the New Testament. They are absolutely without divine warrant. To introduce mere human inventions into divine ordinances is to corrupt the worship, because that which is not commanded is forbidden.

#### It Is Lawless.

2. Instrumental music is a corruption of New Testament worship because

it breaks through the limitation which God placed on its use.

The word corruption used in stating the subject is carefully chosen. It is from "corrumpo," which means "to break through" or "to break together." Dr. Jonathan Edwards in an address on Corruption in Politics, explained the meaning of the word corruption by a familiar illustration. He said: "If you carefully open an orange, and the orange be sound you will find its juices enclosed in little sacs or cells, and thus held in separation. But if the orange has begun to decay, you will find the walls of the cells broken down and the juices run together. The orange is corrupted. The same thing may be discovered in meat. When the meat is untainted the juices are held in organized cells, and when these are broken down the meat is corrupted."

When instrumental music was confined within the limits of its divine appointment as a part of a ceremonial, typical, materialistic and carnal dispensation, the worship was pure and acceptable to God. But when it breaks through the limitations which God has placed upon it and thrusts itself into the spiritual worship of the New dispensation, then it becomes "corruption." Two dispensations, which are radically distinct in their nature have

broken together and the spiritual worship of the New Testament is corrupted by the sensuous worship of the Old.

### It Draws the Mind Away from God, the Object of Worship.

3. Instrumental music is a corruption of New Testament worship because it tends to draw the mind of the worshipper away from God, who is the only object of worship.

"Worship God," said the angel to John in Patmos. The very essence of worship is the communion of the soul with God. "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." James 4: 8. Until the living soul of the worshipper comes into vital contact with the living God, worship has not begun. Whatever emotions are awakened in the soul by the use of forms of devotion, these must terminate on God, or there is no worship. It is possible that in religious services which we call worship, God, who alone is the object of worship, may be left entirely out of view. In such a case there is no true worship.

I will quote here a few brief paragraphs from an article which appeared in the Presbyterian and Reformed Review on the "The Problem of Public Worship." The writer says:

"This is the first thing to be apprehended, that God is the object of worship, and the moment God drops out of

mind and heart, that moment the worship ceases."

Again: "The externals of religious worship are mere ladder and staging by which to climb to God. Whatever in them draws the mind from Him, whether in praise, or in prayer, or in instruction, is a defect hindering worship."

Once more: "A mechanical routine of service, therefore, which, with rhythmic flow, conducts the participant along in sensuous comfort, the eye and ear filled with a sensuous delight, the soul never startled from its dreamy repose, is rather a dream of worship than worship itself, and has no countenance in any New Testament example, \* \* \* Nothing, therefore, can well be more pernicious to the interests of true religion than a service so constructed as to have in it the maximum of appeal to the senses, and the minimum of appeal to an enlightened mind or quickened conscience, or loving heart—that is if it is called worship."

If this article had been written for the express purpose of pointing out the evil tendency of instrumental music, when connected with spiritual forms or worship, it could not have been more accurately expressed than in these sentences. It tends to draw the mind of

the worshipper away from the true object of worship.

It is therefore Attractive to the  
Unconverted.

The advocates of instrumental music in the praise service claim that it makes the service attractive to the unconverted and thus it becomes an effective means of drawing them to the church. To prove this, appeal is made to the fact that where churches provide artistic music, throngs gather to the sanctuary to hear the music, who but for this would remain away. This is probably true. These persons go to the sanctuary for the same purpose as that for which they attend the opera—to hear the music. But how does this fact bear upon the question whether or not such service is true worship? We have seen that the essential element in worship is that the soul of the worshipper be brought in contact with the living God. But nothing is more disturbing to the unconverted than to be brought into the presence of the Holy One. If, therefore, instrumental music renders the praise service attractive to the unconverted, may it not be because it tends to conceal God from view, while it attracts the carnal mind by a purely carnal pleasure?

The discriminating writer referred to above—speaking on this point, says:

“It is not worship which is attractive to such a nature, but simply some sensuous element in the form with which worship clothes itself to the eye, or in the rhythm with which it fills the ear. So that the sweet-voiced choir takes its lesson from Bottom the Weaver and aggravate its voice to roar you, as gently as any sucking dove, the carnal mind is ready to endure its own damnation in the Athanasian creed.” He closes with these words: “That, therefore, in praise, prayer, or instruction, which is equally and for the same reason palatable alike to Christian and unbeliever, however aesthetically enjoyable to a refined taste, must be matter of entertainment rather than worship.”

But instrumental music not only tends to draw the mind away from God, who is the object of worship, but I remark further:

It Draws the Mind of the Worshipper  
Away from Christ, the way of  
Approach to God.

4. Instrumental music is a corruption of New Testament worship because it tends to draw the mind of the worshipper away from Christ, who is the only way of approach to God.

Before Christ came, the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices and the ritualistic worship assisted the worshipper by directing his mind toward Christ. of

